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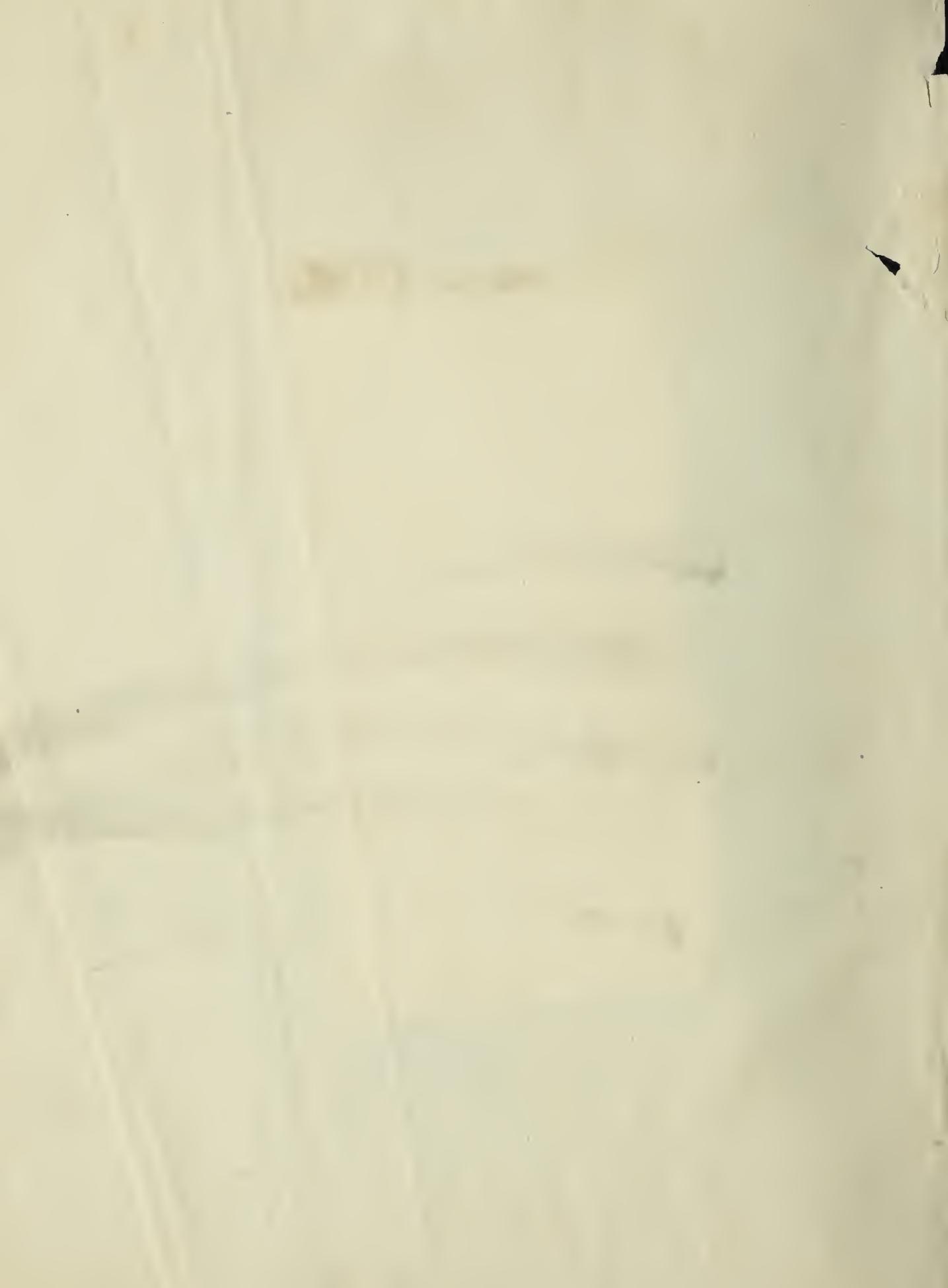
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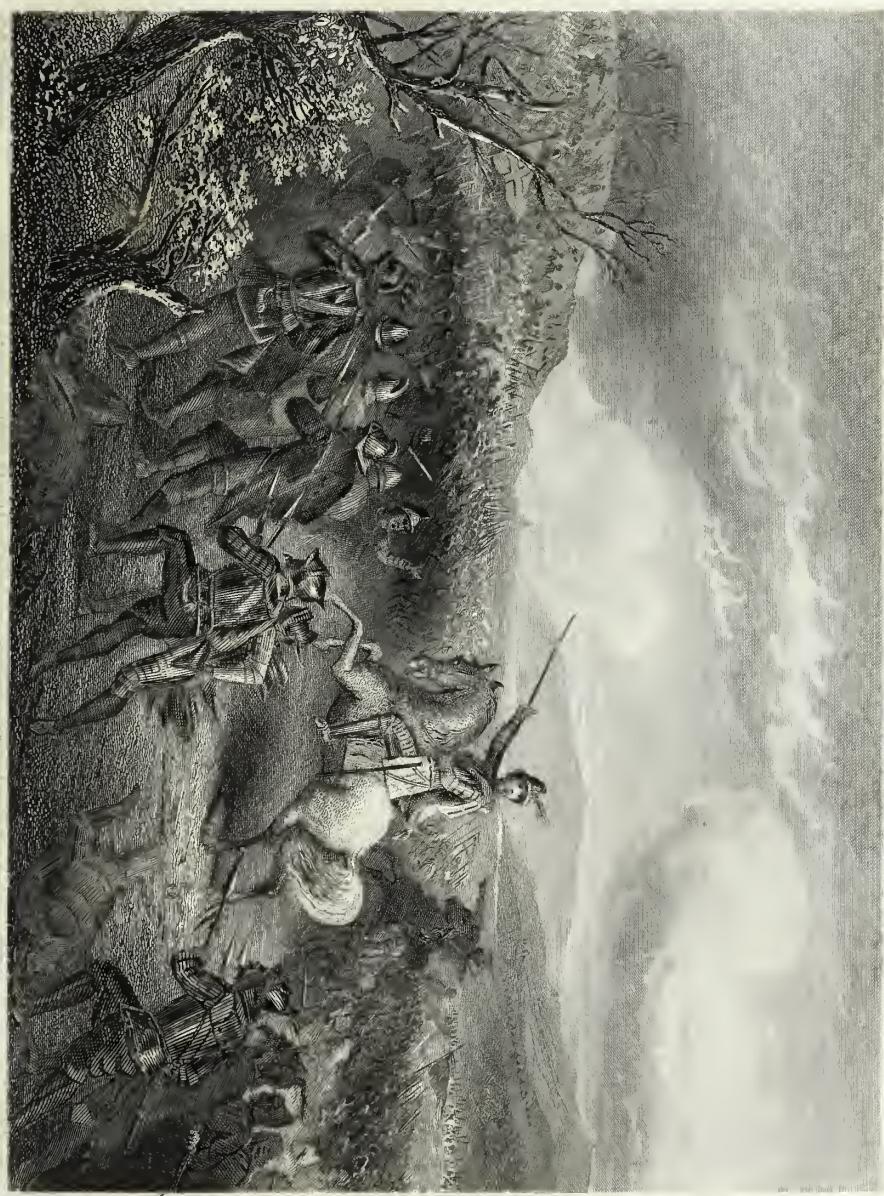


BATTLE OF CLONMACNOSS.



CAPTURE OF THE DANISH STANDARD BY MURROUGH SON OF KING BRIAN BORU



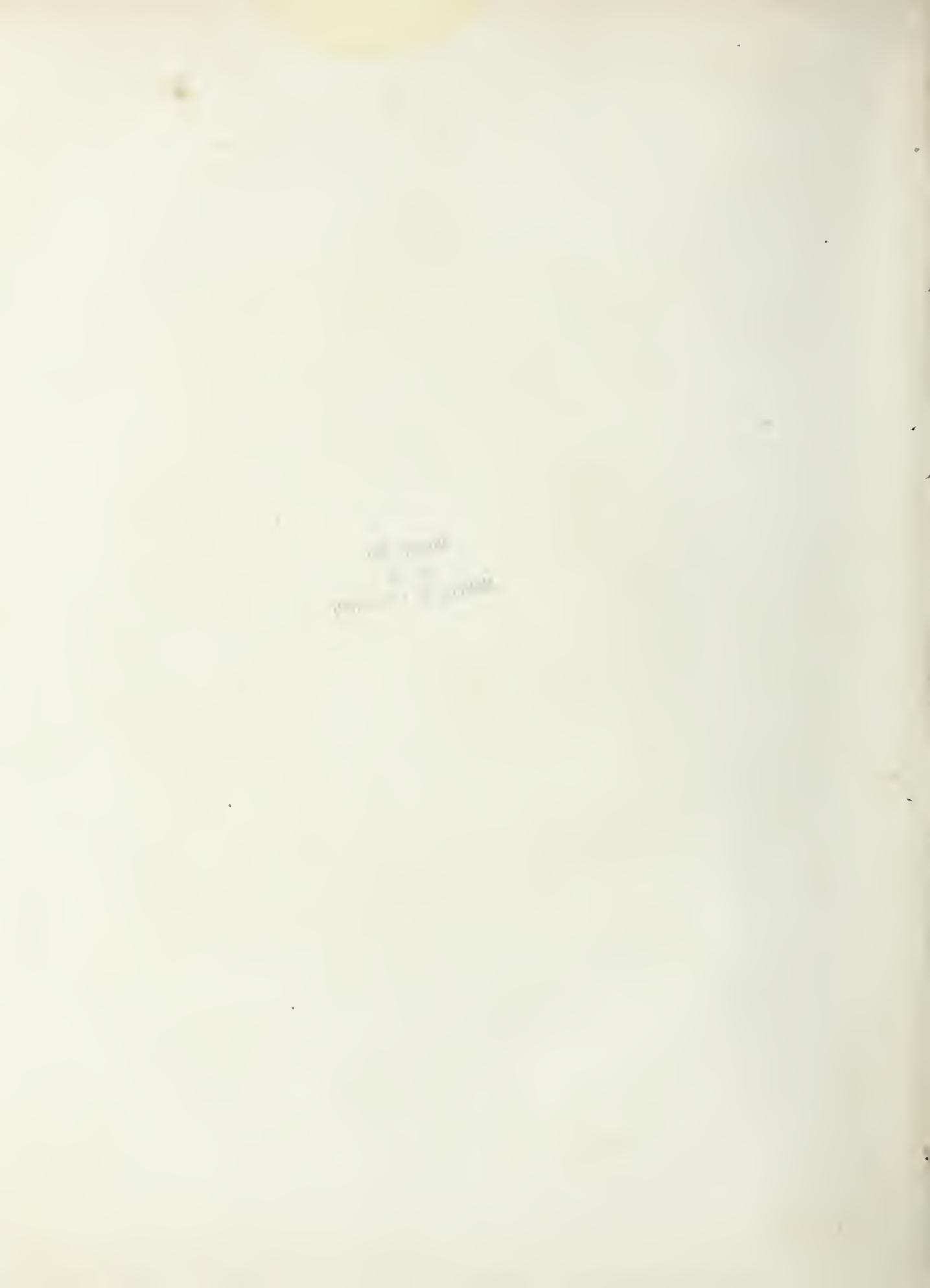


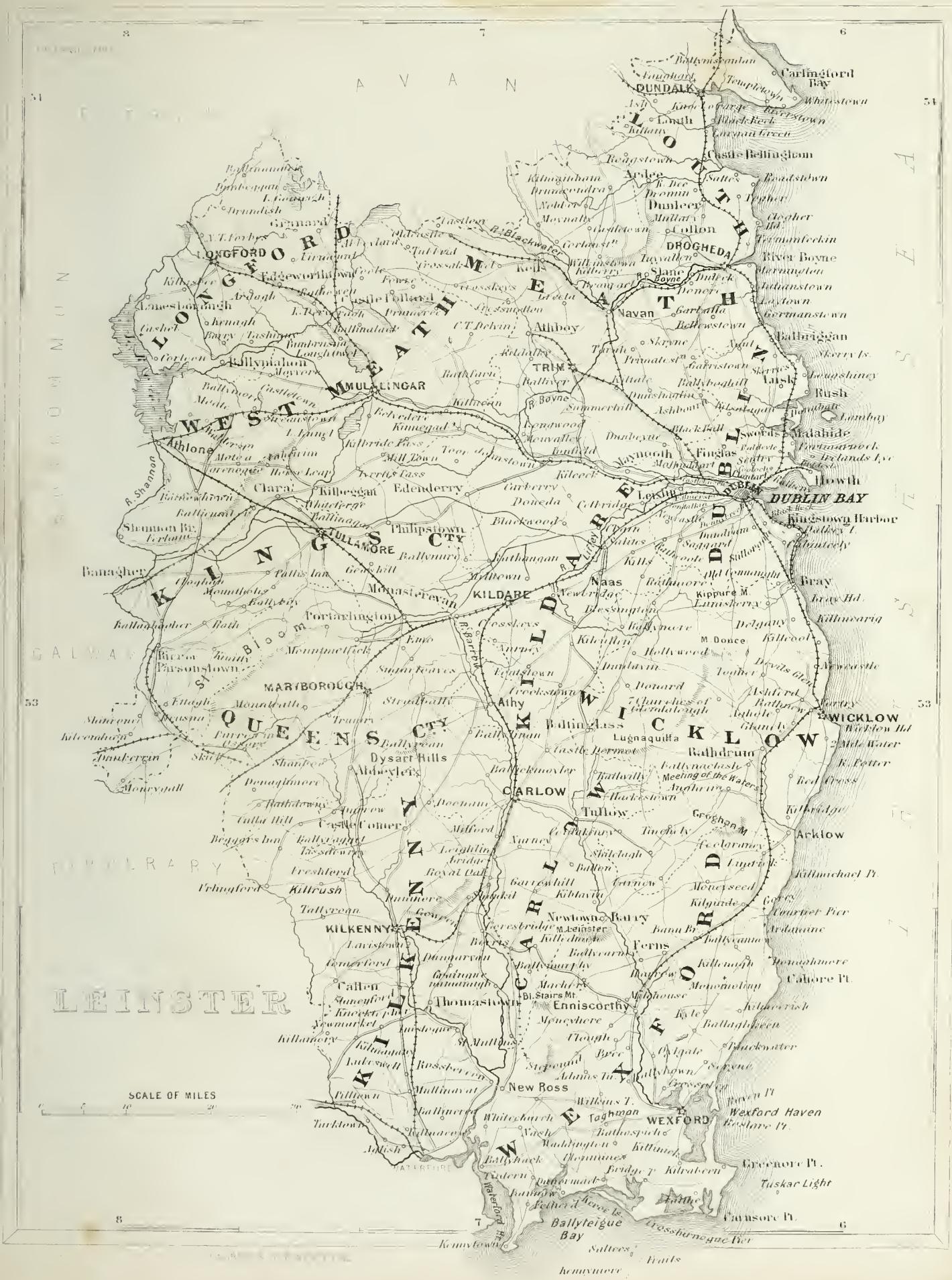


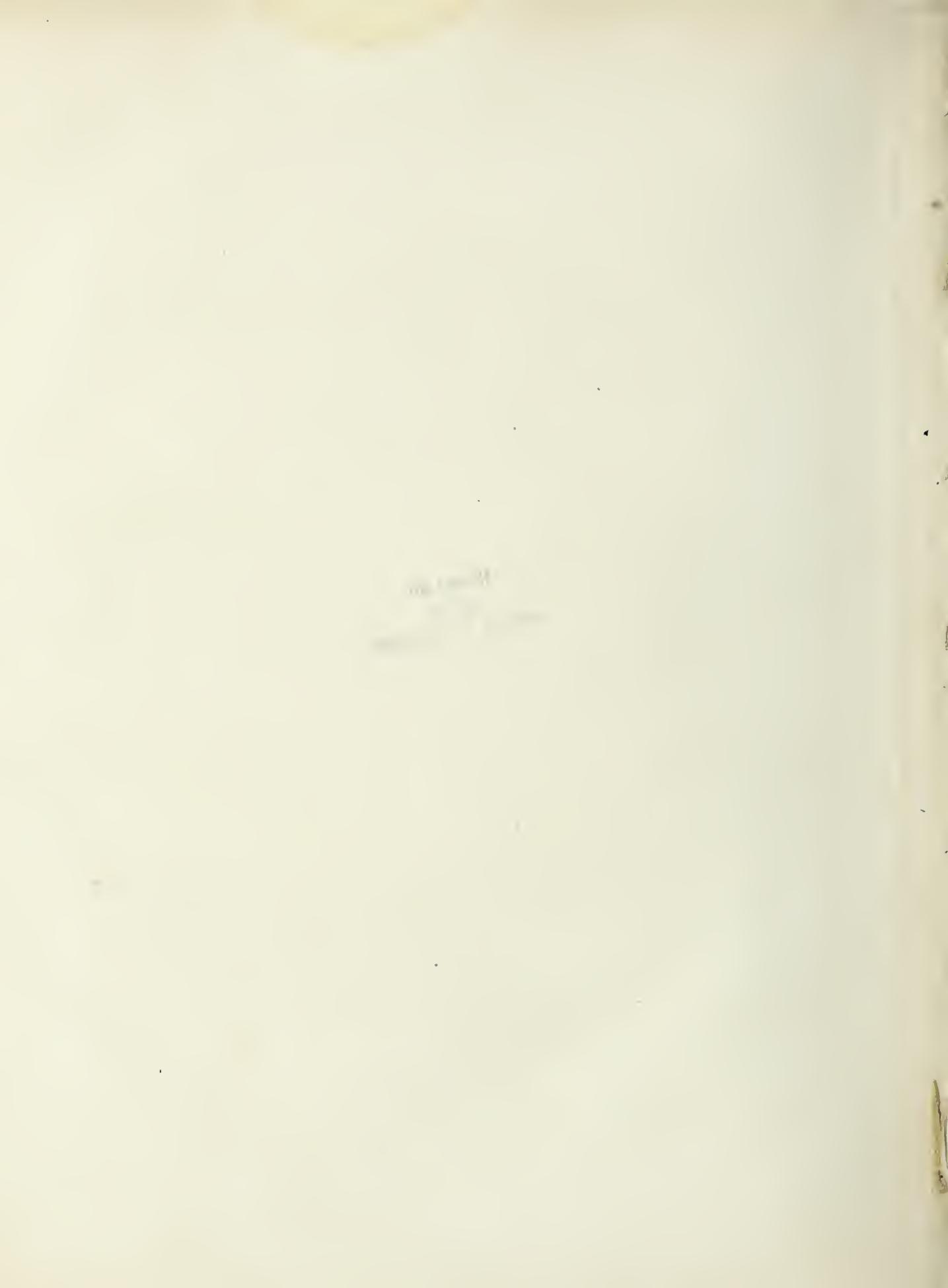












THE

# HISTORY OF IRELAND.

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## CHAPTER I.

The First Inhabitants of Ireland.—The Colonies of Parthalon and Nemadius.—The Fomorians.—The Firbolgs or Belgians.—The Tuatha de Dananns.—The Legend of Mananan Mac Lir, &c.

ACCORDING to the ancient chronicles of Ireland, the first inhabitants of this country was a colony who arrived here from Migdonia, supposed to be Macedonia, in Greece, under a leader whose name was Parthalon, about 300 years after the Deluge, or, according to the chronology adopted by the Four Masters, in the year of the world 2520. Some fables are related of persons having found their way to Ireland before the Flood, and also of a race of people, who lived by fishing and hunting, having been found here by Parthalon (or Parralaun, as the name is pronounced); but these are rejected by our ancient annalists as unworthy of credit, and merit no attention. It is said of Parthalon that he fled from his own country, where he had been guilty of parricide; that he landed at Inver Scene, now the Ken-

mare river,\* accompanied by his three sons, their wives, and a thousand followers; that he was the first who cleared any part of Ireland of the primeval woods which covered it; that certain lakes, namely, Lough Con and Lough Mask, in Mayo, Lough Gara, on the borders of Roscommon and Sligo, two others which cannot now be identified by their ancient names, and Lough Cuan, or Strangford Lough, in the county of Down, were first formed during the period of his colony; that he died in the plain in which Dublin now stands, thirty years after his landing; and that, in the same plain, in A. M. 2820, that is, 300 years after their arrival, his entire colony, then numbering 9,000 persons, perished by a pestilence, in one week, leaving the country once more without inhabitants.†

\* Or, as some think, the river Corrane, in Kerry.

† The place in which this catastrophe happened was called *Sean-Mhuagh-Edla-Edair*, or "The Old Plain of the

*Flocks of Edair*," a name which it received in after-times from an Irish chieftain, from whom the Hill of Howth was called Ben-Edair; and it extended from that hill to the

It is said that Ireland remained waste for thirty years, until the next colony, which also came from the southeastern part of Europe, or the vicinity of the Euxine Sea, led by a chief called Nemedius, or Neimhidh (pronounced *Nevy*), arrived here, and occupied the country for about 200 years. The annals record the names of the raths or forts which were constructed, and of the plains which were cleared of wood during this period; and they also mention the eruption, during the same time, of four lakes, namely, Lakes Derryvaragh and Ennell in Westmeath, and two others not identified. Nemedius, with 2,000 of his followers, were carried off by a pestilence in the island of Ard-Neimhidh, now the Great Island of Barrymore, near Cork; and the remnant of his people, who appear to have been engaged in constant conflicts with a race of pirates called Fomorians, who infested the coast, were at length nearly annihilated in a great battle with these formidable enemies, A. M. 3066. They attacked and demolished the principal Fomorian stronghold, called Tor-Conainn, or Conang's

base of the Dublin mountains, and along the banks of the Liffey.

The memory of this event is preserved in the name of the village of Tallaght (Tamlteacht), which signifies "the plague monument," from *Tamh*, a plague, and *Leacht*, a monument; and in Irish books this place is sometimes called *Tamlteacht Muintir Parthaloin*, or "the plague monument of Parthalon's people," to distinguish it from other plague monuments, also called Tamleachts, in other parts of Ireland. (See O'Donovan's "Four Masters," and Doctor Wilde's "Report on Tables of Deaths," in the Census of 1851.) The pestilence which swept away Parthalon's colony was the first that visited Ireland, and is said to have been caused by the corrupting bodies

Tower, in Tory island, on the north-west coast of Donegal; but succor having arrived by sea to the pirates, the battle was renewed on the strand, and became so fierce that the combatants suffered themselves to be surrounded by the rising tide, so that most of those who did not fall in the mutual slaughter were ingulphed in the waves.\* Three captains of the Nemedians, with a handful of their men, survived, and, in a few years after, made their escape from Ireland, with such of their countrymen as chose to follow their fortunes. One party, under Briotan Maol, a grandson of Nemedius, sought refuge in the neighboring island of Albion, in the northern part of which their posterity remained until the invasion of the Piets, many centuries after; and that island, as some will have it, took the name of Britain from their leader, and not from the fabulous Brutus. Another portion of the refugees passed, after many wanderings, into the northern parts of Europe, where they became the Tuatha de Danaun of a subsequent age; and finally, the third party of the scattered Neme-

of the dead slain in a battle with the people called Fomorians.

\* Who these Fomorians were, who are so often mentioned in Irish history, is a matter of speculation. They are said by some of the old annalists to have been African pirates of the race of Ham; but O'Flaherty thinks they were Northmen, or Scandinavians. Some modern writers will have it that they were Phœnicians; but their name implies in Irish that they were sea-robbers, and it is remarkable that their memory is preserved in the Irish name of the Giant's Causeway, which is Cloghanna-Fionharaigh, or the causeway or stepping-stones of the Fomorians. (See O'Brien's Dict.) The Fomorians are by some called the aborigines of Ireland.

dians made their way, under their chief, Simon Breac, another grandson of Nemedius, to Greece, where they were kept in bondage, and compelled to carry burdens in leathern bags, whence they obtained the name of Firbolgs or Bag-men.\*

For a long interval—200 years, say the bards—after the great battle of Tory island, we are told that Ireland remained almost a wilderness, the few Nemedians who were left behind having retired into the interior of the country, where they, nevertheless, were made to feel the galling yoke of the Fomorians, who were now the undisputed masters of the coast; but at the end of the interval just mentioned, the island was restored to the former race, although under a different name. The Firbolgs having multiplied considerably in Greece, resolved to escape from the bondage under which they groaned, and for that purpose seized the ships of their masters, and proceeding to sea, succeeded in making their way to Ireland, where they landed without opposition (A. M. 3266), and divided the country between their five leaders, the five sons of Dealá, each of whom ruled in turn over the entire island. The names of these brothers were, Slainghe, Rury, Gann, Geannann, and Seangann; and from the first of them the river Slaney, in Wexford, is said to have derived its name. It would appear that there were several

tribes engaged in this expedition, although all belonged to the same race. Thus, one section of them, called Fir-Domhnán, or Damnonians, landed on the coast of Erris, in Mayo, where they became very powerful, giving their name to the district, which has been called, in Irish, Iarras-Domhnán, that is, the western promontory or peninsula of the Damnonians; while another tribe, distinguished by the name of Fir-Gaillian, or Spearmen, landed on the eastern coast, and from them some will have it that the province of Leinster has been so named.†

Such is the account of the origin of the Firbolgs and Damnonians, given by the bardic annalists; and of this and similar relations, which we find in our primeval history, we may remark in general that, however they may be enveloped in fable, we have sufficient reason for believing them to be founded in historic truth; and that they are not lightly to be set aside, where nothing better than conjecture can be substituted. The favorite modern theory is, that the Firbolg colony came into this country from the neighboring coasts of Britain, and that they were identical in race with the people of Belgic Gaul, and with the Belgæ and Dumnonii of Southern Britain. Then arises the question, were these Belgæ Celts, or were they of Tuetonic or Gothic origin? To this we can only answer that the Irish authorities

\* From *Fir*, "men," and *bolg*, which in Irish means a "leathern bag."

† The Irish name of Leinster was sometimes written

Coige Gaillian; *Coige* being the word for a fifth part, or one of the five provinces; but it is more generally called Laighin, a word which signifies a spear or javelin.

are explicit in stating that the Firbolgs were of the same race with subsequent colonies, who were confessedly Celtic, and this seems to be the generally received opinion.\*

The Belgæ, or Firbolgs, had only enjoyed possession of the country for thirty-seven years, according to the chronology of the Four Masters, or for eighty years, according to that of O'Flaherty, when their dominion was disputed by a formidable enemy. The new invaders were the celebrated Tuatha de Dananns, a people of whom such strange things are recounted, that modern writers were long uncertain whether they should regard them as a purely mythical race, or concede to them a real existence, all Irish antiquaries, however, adopting at present the latter alternative. The arrival of the Tuatha de Dananns took place in the year of the world 3303, the tenth year of the reign of the ninth and last of the Firbolgic kings, Eochy, son of Erc. The leader of the invaders was Nuadhat-Airgetlamh, or Nuad of the Silver Hand, and their first proceeding on landing was to burn their own fleet,

in order to render all retreat impossible. According to the superstitious ideas of the bards, these Tuatha de Dananns were profoundly skilled in magic, and rendered themselves invisible to the inhabitants until they had penetrated into the heart of the country. In other words, they landed under cover of a fog or mist; and the Firbolgs, at first taken by surprise, made no regular stand, until the new-comers had marched almost across Ireland, when the two armies met face to face on the plain of Moyturey, near the shore of Lough Corrib, in part of the ancient territory of Partry. Here a battle was fought in which the Firbolgs were overthrown, with "the greatest slaughter," says an old writer,† "that was ever heard of in Ireland at one meeting." Eochy, the Firbolg king, fled, and was overtaken at a place in the present county of Sligo, where he was slain, and where his cairn, or the stone-heap raised over his grave, is still to be seen on the sea-shore; while the scattered fragments of his army took refuge in the northern isle of Aran, Rathlin island, the Hebrides, the Isle of Man, and Britain.‡

\* In the Irish version of Nennius, published for the Irish Archaeological Society, the Firbolgs are termed *Viri Bullorum*, which, as the learned editor, Dr. Todd, remarks, might afford a derivation for the name not previously noticed; the word *Bullum*, in the Latinity of the middle ages, signifying, according to Du Cange, *Raculum pastoris*, a shepherd's staff. In the additional notes to that publication, by the Hon. Algernon Herbert, many curious suggestions are made about these and the other ancient inhabitants of Ireland, all which speculations show how exceedingly vague and meagre is the information that can be gleaned about these primitive races, and how uncertain are the theories which have

been formed about them. Of the Firbolgs, however, as we shall hereafter see, we find frequent mention in what all admit to be authentic periods of Irish history; and their monuments, and even their race, still exist among us.

† Connell Mageoghegan's "Annals of Clonmacnoise."

‡ Book of Leacan, fol. 277; quoted in the Ogygia, Part iii., c. 9.

The site of this battle is sometimes called Moyturey of Cong, from its proximity to that town, and "it is still pointed out," says Dr. O'Donovan (Four Masters, vol. i. p. 16), "in the parish of Cong, barony of Kilmaine, and county of Mayo, to the right of the road as you go

The victorious Nuadhat lost his hand in this battle, and a silver hand was made for him by Credne Cerd, the artificer, and fitted on him by the physician, Diencecht, whose son, Miach, improved the work, according to the legend, by infusing feeling and motion into every joint of the artificial hand as if it had been a natural one. Hence the surname which the king received. The story may be taken as an illustration of the surgical and mechanical skill which the Tuatha de Dananns were believed to possess: and we are further told, that for the seven years during which the operation was in progress, a temporary king was elected, Breas, whose father was a Fomorian, and whose mother was of the Tuatha de Dananns, having been chosen for the purpose. At the end of that period Nuadhat resumed the authority; and in the twentieth year of his reign, counting from this resumption, he fell in a battle fought with the Fomorians, who took the field at the instigation of their countryman, the deposed king, Breas, and were aided also, we may suppose, by the Firbolg refugees. This battle was fought at a place called Northern Moyturey, or Moyturey of the Fomorians; and its name is still preserved in that of a townland in the barony of Tirerrill, in the county of Sligo, where several sepulchral monuments

still mark the site of the ancient battlefield. Nuadhat was killed in this conflict by Balor "of the mighty blows," the leader of the Fomorians, who is described in old traditions as a monster both in barbarity and strength, and as having but one eye. Balor himself was killed in the same battle by a stone cast from a sling by his daughter's son, Lugh Lamhfada, or Lewy of the long hand, in revenge for some of his crimes.

We have here followed the generally received account of the fate of the Firbolgs in the Tuatha de Danann invasion; but there is another version of it given in an ancient Irish manuscript\* which is much more consistent with subsequent history. According to this latter account, the battle of Southern Moyturey resulted in a compromise, rather than in such a defeat as that mentioned above; and although the Firbolg king was slain, another leader of the same people, named Srang, was still at the head of a considerable force; and, after some negotiations, a partition of the country was agreed to, Srang and his people retaining Connaught, and the Tuatha de Dananns taking all the remainder. MacFirbis, in his tract on the Firbolgs, seems to say that an account of the affair to some such effect existed; and unless it be admitted, it is impossible to account for the firm footing which

from Cong to the village of the Neal. From the monuments of this battle still remaining, it is quite evident that great numbers were slain." The cairn of the Firbolg king, Eochy, is on the shore near Ballysadare, in the county of Sligo; and, although not high above the

strand, it is the popular belief that the tide can never cover it.

\* The author is indebted to Professor Eugene Curry for the purport of this tract, which appears to have escaped the attention of our other Irish scholars.

## THE TUATHA DE DANANNS.

we find these people all along holding in Ireland, and for their position at the Milesian epoch, when they were at first received as allies by the invaders, and were afterwards, for centuries, able to resist them in war. Nor is this account inconsistent with the statement that many of the Firbolgs repaired, on the arrival of the Tuatha de Dananns, to the islands mentioned above.

Lugh Lamhfada, the slayer of Balor, succeeded Nuadhat as king of Ireland; and the fact that he was of Fomorian origin, on his mother's side, and a Tuatha de Danann on that of his father, as well as a like mingling of races in the person of Breas, the first king of the Tuatha de Dananns, led to the conclusion that an affinity existed between the two races, and afford an argument to O'Flaherty, who held that both races were Northmen, or Danes.\* Lugh reigned forty years, and instituted the public games, or fair, of the hill of Tailltean, now Teltown, near the Blackwater, in Meath, in commemoration of his foster-mother, Taillte, the daughter of Maghmor, a Spanish or Iberian king, and wife of Eochy, son of Erc, the last of the Firbolg kings, after whose death, in the battle of Southern Moyturey, she married a Tuatha de Danann chief, and undertook the fostering, or education, of the infant Lewy. This celebrated fair, at which various sports took place, continued to be held until the twelfth century, on the 1st of August, which day

is still called, in Irish, Lugh-Nasadhl, or Lugh's fair; and vivid traditions are yet preserved of the pagan form of marriage, and ancient sports, of which the old rath of Teltown was the scene.†

Lewy, having been killed by Mac-Cuill at Caendruim, now the hill of Uisneach, in Westmeath, was succeeded by Eochy Ollathair, who was surnamed the Dagda Mor (the Great-good-fire), the son of Ealathan. The Dagda reigned eighty years, and having died from the effects of a wound inflicted 120 years before at the battle of Northern Moyturey, with a poisoned javelin, by Kathlen, the wife of the Fomorian Balor, he was interred at the Brugh, on the Boyne, the great cemetery of the east of Ireland in the pagan times. His monument is mentioned in ancient Irish manuscripts as one of those vast sepulchral mounds which are at this day objects of wonder and interest on the banks of the Boyne, between Drogheda and Slane.

A. M. 3451.—Dealboeth, the son of Ogma, succeeded, and was followed by Fiacha; after whom three brothers, named MacCuill, MacCeacht, and MacGreine, the last of the Tuatha de Danann kings, reigned conjointly for thirty years, each exercising sovereign authority in succession for the space of one year. The real names of the three brothers, according to an old poem quoted by Keating, were, Eathur, Teathur, and Ceathur, and they were called, the first, MacCuill, because he

\* Ogygia, part i., p. 13.

† See Wilde's Boyne and Blackwater, p. 150. Ogygia, part iii., c. 13 and 56.

worshipped the hazel-tree; the second, MacCeacht, because he worshipped the plough, or rather, encouraged agriculture; and the third, MacGreine, because he made the sun the object of his devotions. The old bardic annalists, who, with a gallantry peculiar to their country, derive most of the names of places from celebrated women, tell us that the wives of these three kings were Eire, Banba, and Fodhla, three sisters who have given their names to Ireland; and they add that the country was called after each queen during the year of her husband's administration; and that if the name of Eire has been since more generally applied, it was because the husband of queen Eire was the reigning king when the Milesians arrived and conquered the island. The names of Banba and Fodhla are frequently given to Ireland in all the ancient Irish writings.

Before we leave the Tuatha de Dananns, whose sway continued for 197 years—from A. M. 3303 to A. M. 3500—we may mention two or three remarkable circumstances connected with the accounts of that ancient people. By them the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, on which the Irish kings were crowned in subsequent ages, was brought into Ireland. This stone was said to emit mysterious sounds when touched by the

rightful heir to the crown; and when an Irish colony invaded North Britain, and founded the Scottish monarchy there in the sixth century, the Lia Fail was carried thither to give more solemnity to the coronation of the king, and more security to his dynasty. It was afterwards preserved for several ages in the monastery of Sccone, but was carried into England by Edward I., in the year 1300, and deposited in Westminster Abbey, and is believed to be identical with the large block of stone now to be seen under the coronation chair.\*

Ogma, one of the Tuatha de Danann princes, is said to have invented the Ogam Craove, or occult mode of writing by notches on the edges of sticks or stones; and Orbsen, another of them, is celebrated as the mythical protector of commerce and navigation. He was commonly called *Mananan*, from the Isle of Man, of which he was king, and *Maclir*, son of the sea, from his knowledge of nautical affairs. He was killed in a battle in the west of Ireland by Ullin, grandson of King Nuad of the Silver Hand, and was buried in an island in the large lake, which from him was called Lough Orbsen, since corrupted into Lough Corrib, the place where the battle was fought being still called Moycullen, or the plain of Ullin.†

\* Dr. Petrie, in his History and Antiquities of Tara Hill, controverts this account of the Lia Fail, and employs some learned, though not conclusive, arguments to show that that celebrated relic of pagan antiquity is the present pillar-stone over the "Croppies' Grave" in one of the great raths of Tara. O'Flaherty (*Ogygia*, p. 45.)

thinks the Stone of Destiny was not carried to Scotland until A. D. 850, when it was sent by Hugh Finnliath, king of Ireland, to his father-in-law, Kenneth MacAlpine, who finally subjugated the Picts.

† Dr. O'Donovan, in a note on the Tuatha de Dananns (*Four Masters*, vol. i., p. 24), says:—"In Mageoghegan's

## CHAPTER II.

The Milesian Colony.—Wanderings of the Gadelians.—Voyage of Ith to Ireland.—Expedition of the Sons of Miledh, or Milesius.—Contests with the Tuatha de Dananns.—Division of Ireland by Heremon.—The Cruithnians, or Picts.

THE old annalists preface the account of the Milesian invasion of Ireland by a long story of the origin of that colony, and of its many wanderings, by land and sea, for several hundred years, until it arrived in Ireland from Spain. There is no part of our primitive history that has been so frequently questioned, or which modern writers so generally reject as fabulous, as these first accounts of the Milesian or Gadelian race; yet

they are so mixed up with our authentic history, and so frequently referred to, that they cannot be passed over in silence. We, therefore, give an outline of the narrative, chiefly as we find it related in the *Duan Eireannach*, or Poem of Ireland, written by Maelmura of Othain, one of the most ancient of our authorities for the Milesian tradition.\*

We are told in this poem that Fenius Farsaidh came out of Scythia to

translation of the Annals of Clonmacnoise it is stated that 'this people, Tuathy DeDan, ruled Ireland for 197 years; that they were most notable magicians, and would work wonderful things by magick and other diabolical arts, wherein they were exceedingly well skilled, and in these days accompted the chiefest in the world in that profession.' From the many monuments ascribed to this colony by tradition, and in ancient Irish historical tales, it is quite evident that they were a real people; and from their having been considered gods and magicians by the Gaedhil, or Scotti, who subdued them, it may be inferred that they were skilled in arts which the latter did not understand. Among them was Danann, the mother of the gods, from whom *Da chich Danainne*, a mountain in Kerry (the Pap Mountain), was called; Buanann, the goddess that instructed the heroes in military exercises, the Minerva of the ancient Irish; Badhbh, the Bellona of the ancient Irish; Abhorthach, god of music; Ned, the god of war; Nemon, his wife; Manannan, the god of the sea; Diancecht, the god of physic; Brioghit, the goddess of poets and smiths, &c. It appears from a very curious and ancient Irish tract, written in the shape of a dialogue between St. Patrick and Caoilte MacRonain, that there were very many places in Ireland where the Tuatha de Dananns were then supposed to live as sprites or fairies, with corporeal and material forms, but endued with immortality. The inference naturally to be drawn

from these stories is, that the Tuatha de Dananns lingered in the country for many centuries after their subjugation by the Gaedhil, and that they lived in retired situations, where they practised abstruse arts, which induced the others to regard them as magicians. . . . It looks very strange that our genealogists trace the pedigree of no family living for the last thousand years to any of the kings or chieftains of the Tuatha de Dananns, while several families of Firbolgic descent are mentioned, as in Hy-Many, and other parts of Connaught. (See Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many, pp. 85-90; and O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, part iii., c. 11.)

Manannan MacLir is described in Cormac's Glossary as "a famous merchant of the Isle of Man, and the best navigator in the western world." Dr. O'Donovan (Four Masters, vol. iii., p. 532, note) says: "There exists a tradition in the county of Londonderry that the spirit of this celebrated navigator lives in an enchanted castle in the *tuns* or waves of Magilligan, opposite Inishowen, and that his magical ship is seen there once every seventh year."

\* Maelmura of Othain (now Fahan, in Donegal) died A. D. 884, and the historical poem referred to above was printed, for the first time, in the Irish version of Nennius, published in 1848 by the Irish Archaeological Society, with copious notes by the Rev. Dr. Todd, S. F. T. C. D., and by the Hon. Algernon Herbert.































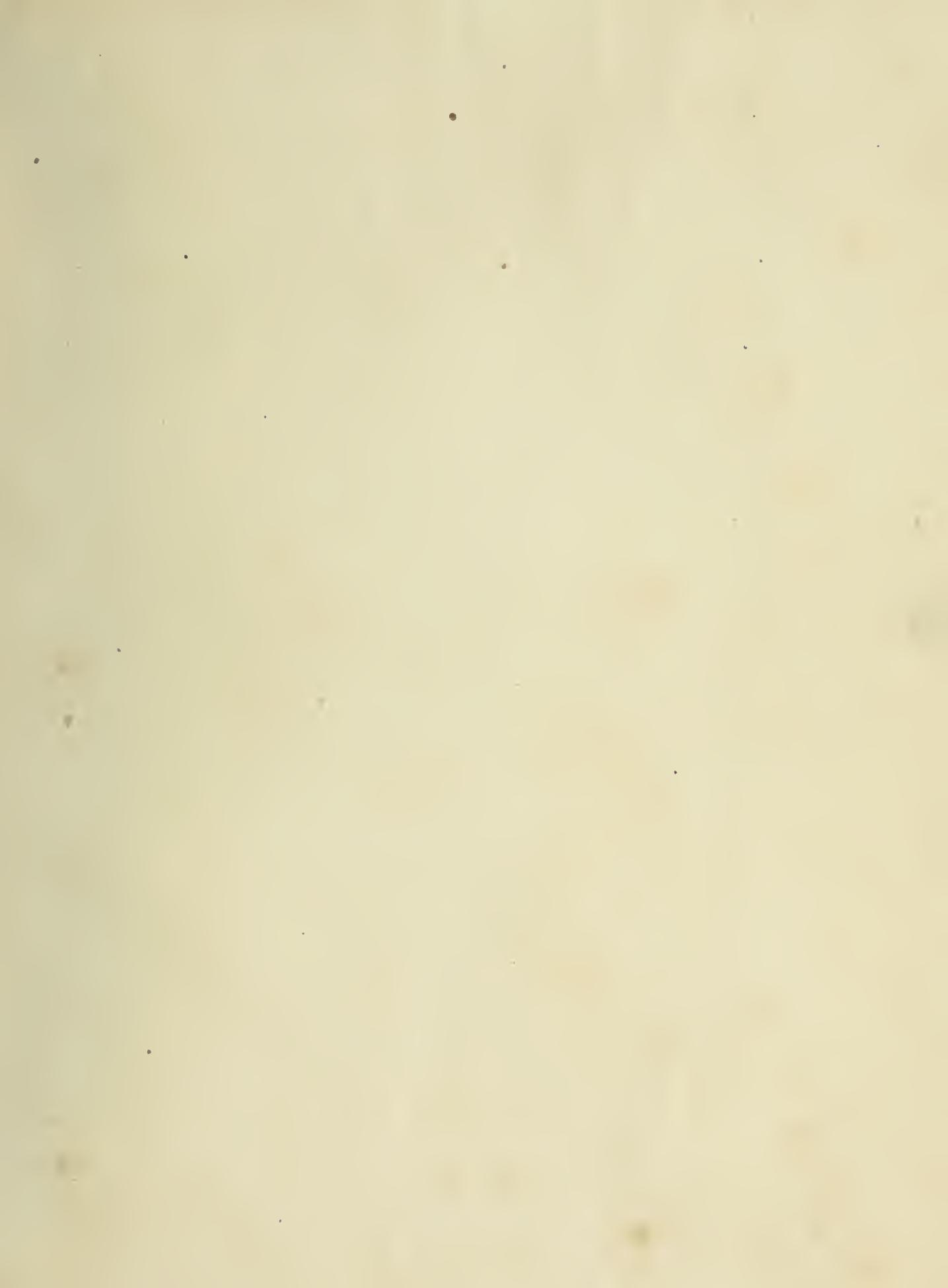


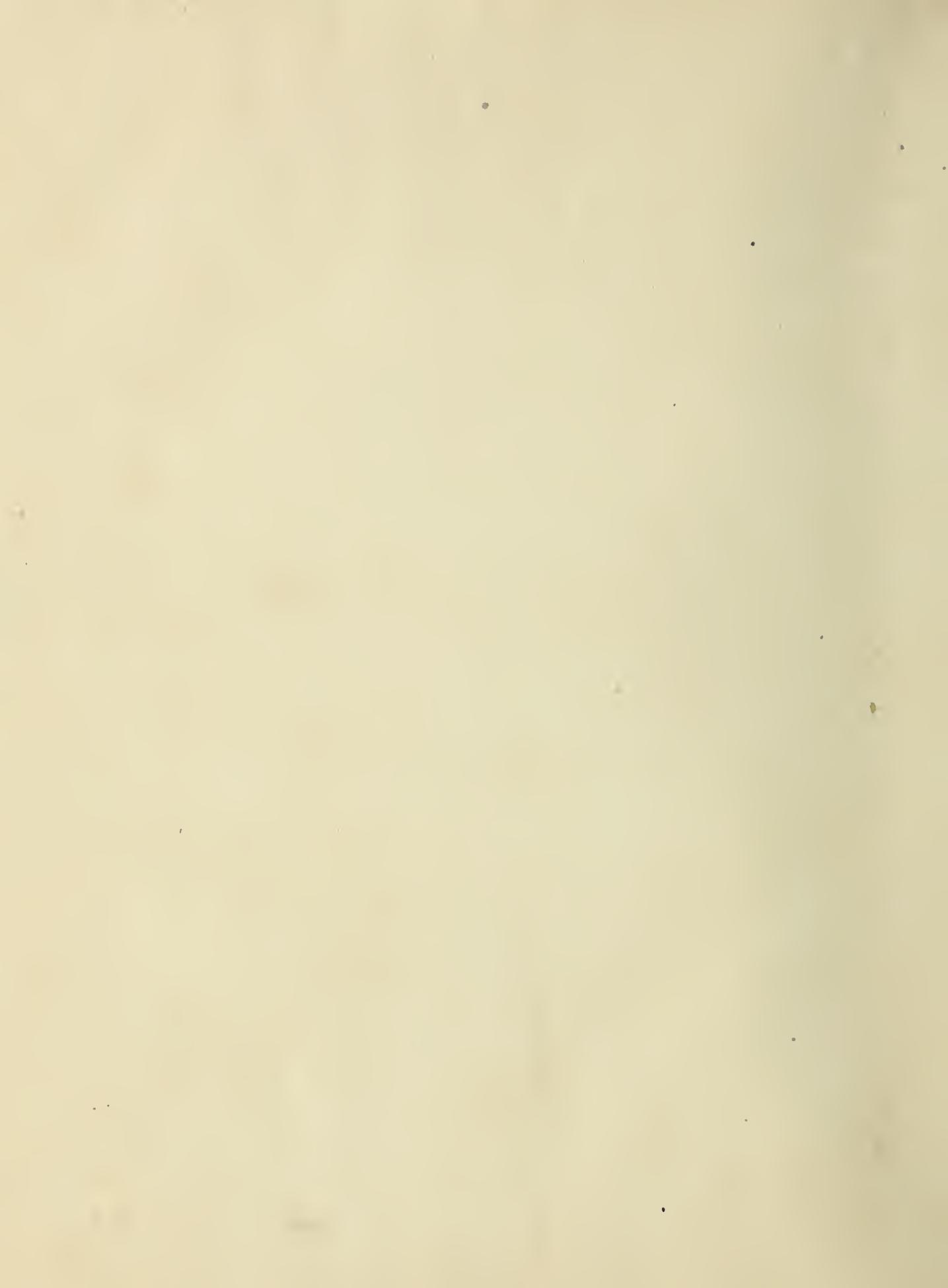
















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